

Regional Collapse, Regional Liberation

or: The Primitivist Theory of Combined & Uneven Development

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Introduction

The spread of Capitalism and Industrialism was predominantly a 'Western' phenomenon, which slowly disseminated among the world through trade, and colonial and imperial relations.

The centers of industrial-economics, or the First World, outsources the process of primary industry – the extraction and collection of natural resources to the Third World. The First World then takes this industry and turns it into secondary industry – the goods themselves- manufacturing.

With the expansion of decentralized production, we see a more efficient system of the development of technologies and general goods in the First World, while the Third World provides the basis for that system. It is no secret that the Third World is under the systems of neo-colonialism and imperialism, their labor and resources extracted at an unfair, and uneven rate. This creates a hierarchical system of power, creating an interesting situation in the fight against Industry: If civilization and industry did not come across the world evenly, then we cannot expect the collapse to act in such a linear, immediate manner.

Historical Precedence

In the words of Leon Trotsky, "...[T]he entire history of mankind is governed by the law of uneven development." Trotsky saw development as uneven, meaning the world does not progress at the same pace, either through economic developments or cultural norms. It also would include secondary characteristics such as population density.

Even within a single state, we can see developments that do not progress equally. The greatest example is the North-South divide of the United States. Where the North embraced and grew under the Industrial Revolution, limiting the need for slave labor, in exchange for a wage system; the South kept a primarily agrarian economy, relying more so on slave labor and plantation systems.

However, the North and South were of course not isolated from one another, but had constant relations, positive and negative. The North was able to finance their industrialization through taxes on imports, many of which impacted the South more so than the North.

Besides the North favoring an industrial, free-market economy, and the South's preference of agrarian slavery; the city-scape and transportation methods were vastly different, due to the factors of economic differences.

Industrialism allowed the North to enlarge their urban areas. The North's largest cities in 1860 were New York City and Philadelphia, whose populations were roughly 813,669 and 565,529, respectively. Contrast this to the South in the same year, whose largest cities were New Orleans and Charleston, with populations at 168,675 and 40,522, respectively. The North's two largest cities as listed alone added to 1,379,198 and the South's added only to 209,197. Only one-tenth of Southerners lived in urban areas, while the North held one-quarter in their urban areas. (information from Civil War Gazette & National Parks Service)

The North also held over 7/10ths of all railroads, allowing a growing effective method transportation of both people and goods. This also served important during the Civil War. In contrast, the South utilized horse-drawn carriages and steamboats more often.

Perhaps another example of this theory of development can be shown, but more on the side of ‘combined’ rather than ‘uneven’. For this, I will cite two passages from Trotsky, the main proponent of the theory:

“The meagerness not only of Russian feudalism, but of all the old Russian history, finds its most depressing expression in the absence of real mediaeval cities as centres of commerce and craft. Handicraft did not succeed in Russia in separating itself from agriculture, but preserved its character of home industry. The old Russian cities were commercial, administrative, military and manorial – centres of consumption, consequently, not of production. [...] The chief roads of Russian trade, moreover, led across the border, thus from time immemorial giving the leadership to foreign commercial capital, and imparting a semi-colonial character to the whole process, in which the Russian trader was a mediator between the Western cities and the Russian villages. This kind of economic relation developed further during the epoch of Russian capitalism and found its extreme expression in the imperialist war[...] The law of combined development reveals itself most indubitably, however, in the history and character of Russian industry. Arising late, Russian industry did not repeat the development of the advanced countries, but inserted itself into this development, adapting their latest achievements to its own backwardness. Just as the economic evolution of Russia as a whole skipped over the epoch of craft-guilds and manufacture, so also the separate branches of industry made a series of special leaps over technical productive stages that had been measured in the West by decades. Thanks to this, Russian industry developed at certain periods with extraordinary speed. Between the first revolution and the war, industrial production in Russia approximately doubled. This has seemed to certain Russian historians a sufficient basis for concluding that “we must abandon the legend of backwardness and slow growth.”[...]”

As Trotsky explains above, Russia’s unique development was largely due to the nation’s relationship to Western Europe through foreign financing, which can be seen as a growth midigator and a semi-colonial oppression. This led to a mix of Russia’s ‘backwardness’ (feudal relations) and industry (from the West).

Interestingly, the United States also had its own combined development, as it had skipped the stage of feudalism, or any pre-existing mode of production, for that matter. Instead, it was born among competing Western nations, predominantly Spain, France, and Britain in the later years. While it did begin mostly as an agrarian nation, it did not have the ‘tributary’ aspects of Feudalism. This may be an explanation for the exaggerated North-South economic divide. Also, the historically large amount of slave labor, shared by the North and South, may have also been caused by this phenomenon – as it had not developed its own cultural economic identity.

Compressions and Descalings

The progression of technology and culture has not developed on a totally linear path, but rather a complex series of ‘compressions’ and ‘descalings’. A compression (or acceleration) is seen in developing countries’ pseudo-industrial developments paired with their more tribal or primitive

social organization. A descaling is more in-line with the fall of political, economic and/or technological capabilities of the post-Soviet states.

Compressions and Descalings can come in different intensities. For example, the descplings of the post-Soviet states is hardly comparable to the situation in which Western Rome fell into smaller, eventual Nation-States. The Soviet Union, under the NEP and the 5-year plans of Lenin and Stalin respectively, accelerated scientific; technological; agricultural; and cultural developments under the influence of their respective systems, but also due to relations to other countries. The Soviet Union, despite holding contrarian ideology, held trade relations to countries like the United States, Canada and those in Western Europe. This could include bartering products, hiring foreign construction and engineering firms, and standard credit/cash-for-product trade.

These relations, especially under the first two 5-Year plans between 1928–1937, compressed or rather, accelerated the Soviet industrial system.

Exploitation

While the Soviet Union benefited heavily from these accelerations, other countries do not. Russia, before the Bolsheviks, had a semi-colonial relation to Western Europe; today, areas of Asia, South America and Africa have similar relations to pre-Bolshevik Russia. It creates a culture where these developing, exploited countries are “inserted...into this development, adapting [the West’s] latest achievements to its own backwardness.”

These countries are victims of exploitation such as neo-colonialism and imperialism. They are given foreign aid; machinery; and corporate and political influence from the West only as long as they use it to benefit their oh so benevolent benefactors.

With the growing environmental crisis, there will be a larger and larger cause for ‘green’ and ‘sustainable’ technology. Such issues from this includes the health issues from producing Silicon, impacting both miners and the environment. Silicon is currently the most popular material in Solar Cells.

But health issues are the least of our worries, especially in the developed world, where health and work codes are most advanced. Instead, it is the Developing World – where the highest price has been paid for humanity’s rare mineral addiction.

Take the Democratic Republic of Congo, where 60% of cobalt, a material popular in batteries, is mined. Excessive human rights abuses, child labor and envirometnal negligience have been birthed by the growing market for cobalt, especially under the guise of electirc vehicles. Colton’s main producers are Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Brazil and China, and this production has constantly stirred what can be called ‘Colton Ethics’. Almost all the listed countries have been accused of human rights and child labor abuse, either in the extraction or processing of the materials, accordng to the ILRF. Colton of course is used primarily in smartphones and computers, a large ‘necessity’ in today’s day-to-day life.

Many companies like Apple only temporarily ceased buying materials from countries like Democratic Republic of Congo after large report of ‘slave conditions’ was released in 2016 and 2017, despite smaller reports repeating the same horrid information years prior. Apple has even moved to purchase those materials from China, despite having their own disastrous human-rights and ecological issues. China even has their hands in the DRC, so this is more a round-

about purchase than nebulous market decisions on the side of Apple and others. So evidently, this growing Green Revolution is not as sustainable as one may believe.

Some may make the case for Socialist or Communist relations as a solution to this exploitation, but there simply is a lack of evidence to show the end of capital is the end of all exploitation. Citing Marx and Co. as prophets is only an appeal to authority, not an analysis of previous socialist experiments or 'post-Socialist' states.

Regional Collapse

The above mentioned information may very well seem irrelevant to the Primitivist movement, and more in line with Communist rhetoric, and this is true. Most talk of exploitation is associated with a critique of class society rather than technology, unless it means as a general rule of thumb of the common person.

However, this does not mean we cannot adopt Communist analysis for our means. It also gives us the basis of a more realistic analysis. Where many Primitivists (such as Kaczynski) see a total collapse (either quickly or over a period of time) as feasible, other Primitivists such as myself and Jacobi instead push for the idea of "regional collapse."

This is not to say we dismiss the idea of a total civilizational collapse, or don't want it, but we don't see it as necessarily realistic. If we understand the rise of civilization, agriculture, capital and technology as uneven, and sometimes in completely isolated areas, how can we expect the collapse of industrial / world society to be some sort of global apocalypse? We can't.

While globalism expands via increasingly effective methods of travel and communication, we may very well see domino effects — a truly crippling strike can indeed cause a rapid collapse, but an apocalyptic worldview is more cinematic than realistic. The timescale of such a collapse will indeed be quick in a historical sense. For example, Rome's collapse was a collection of mass diseases, financial issues, infighting for power, incompetent leaders and a total complexity that far outweighed any available energy (food, manpower, technology). These collective issues spanned almost 300 years until Rome's total collapse between 476–480.

By regional collapse, we essentially mean regions of varying sizes and cultural diversity will see localized movements against industrial / world society. These movements may or may not share our ideological views. But, whether or not they mean to, they are fighting against industrial/world Society. Religious fundamentalism, tribal conflict against larger nations and so forth are examples. This method of revolution, of course, is a sort of balkanization.

We can see inspiration in movements that base their seizure of power through balkanization, such as the Zapatistas. In the words of John Jacobi:

The Zapatistas, of course, are the most obvious example of the latter. In the 90s they utilized new internet technologies and the political power of NGOs to win a sufficient amount of territory for their social ideals. They survive to this day, and have, in most respects, won. Not nearly enough to challenge industrial society, they are nevertheless representative of the kind of balkanization we should like to see in the future.

Furthermore, Jacobi said:

Even since 2001 there have been a number of revolutions, successful insurgent struggles, and related radical political events. That these are only regional supports the author's contention that revolutionary struggle alone cannot solve the global ecological crisis, but there is no reason to dispose of regionally-confined revolutions as a tool in our toolkit. It is entirely feasible to imagine ecologically-based social transformation happening through a series of revolutions, just as Enlightenment ideas started in France, spread to the rest of Europe through Napoleon, and eventually made it to the New World with the American revolutionaries and Simon Bolivar.

And finally:

But if the preservation of traditional communities and the collapse of industrial infrastructure is to be assured, we will need to figure out a way to mobilize these regional phenomena for an offensive against industrial society.

These regional collapses or balkanizations are extreme examples of the above mentioned descalings, with massive implications in all regards. What is needed is a mobilization and critical support of these movements under our ideological framework. What these specifics will be, are beyond us at this time.

In addition, the continued exploitation, unless solved in the near future, will continue to create situations of conflict, mostly those with many parties involved, and with the new rules of engagement.

Jean Baudrillard best put this as, "Today's terrorism is not the product of a traditional history of anarchism, nihilism, or fanaticism. It is instead the contemporary partner of globalization."

Regional Liberation

With our proceeding statements of regional collapse, descalings and uneven development leading to exploitation, we have come to the last major point in this piece — our support for regional liberation. This has heavy similarities to the Leninist conception of National Liberation — where a nation has the right to fight against colonial or imperial powers in order to define their own destiny in terms of socialist development.

However, of course our support comes from challenging the stability of regions, economically and politically. With the rise of multi-party conflicts in exploited nations and semi-colonies, at home and abroad, there is a possible future of Primitivist support and even influence in these events.

Of course, not all regional movements will necessarily benefit our goals. However, tribal insurgencies, certain national movements, religious uprising, anti-Western demonstrations all are possible events in which we can place our critical support or even assert possible influence, either through a future, above ground movement; or disseminate our ideology through other, secret methods.

Typically the regional liberation side of balkanization will likely exist in the Developing world, or areas within developed nations that are 'backwater'. For example, in China, the peasants stand in stark contrast to the urban centers. In America, share-cropping exists in its own contrast to

Western development. Internal semi-colonies in America may also prove to be hotbeds of such liberation movements.

Otherwise, balkanization movements, either with politics that are Primitivist or not – will have their own reasons. These may be a result of political turmoil, desertification or other destabilizing events.

Our goal should be to bring these movements under a larger movement, or political identity. If not, our support for them will be crucial. Global crime, terrorism, and war will be our situational allies. Pairing with other political and/or religious radicals, and tribal or oppressed national groups, especially those already involved with their own conflicts, will be of good use in our toolkit.

Federation of American Scientists published a piece in 1996 titled ‘Global Organized Crime’ and the following selection makes an interesting point:

[...] Many terrorist groups that engage in violent acts are motivated by specific political causes, such as Egyptian Islamic Fundamentalist terrorists who use violent means to protest their country’s current government and Western influences, most organized crime groups are only interested in political power for the security it would provide their organization and are primarily motivated by money.

The international economic threat, posed by Global Organized Crime, in an increasingly global economy is among the major “new” threats to national security. The major economic powers and the less developed nations did not previously share a collective problem of this nature. Global Organized Crime does not just affect a select group of financial institutions or regional areas, it affects international financial networks and economies at a national level.

The author believed such Global Organized Crime threatens our economies and political structures, global and national:

Transnational organized crime groups pose more of a threat to international financial markets as the world economy becomes increasingly interdependent. Laundering billions of dollars in organized crime money worsens national debt problems because the large sums of money are then lost as tax revenue to that country’s government.

Global Organized Crime can have a damaging effect on political structures, especially the fragile new systems of government found in the former communist or totalitarian regimes. South American drug cartels have a destabilizing effect on governments through their financial support of local guerilla rebels, such as the Sendero Luminoso in Peru and the Revolutionary Armed Forces in Columbia, who share their animosity toward the government and who exchange protection for money and arms supplies. The Sicilian Mafia have used their economic power over local businesses and banks and their supplies of cash to corrupt politicians, judges and Law Enforcement, assassinating many of those public figures who will not cooperate. Media polls indicate that the many Russians believe the “mafia” is more powerful than the government. As people feel that the government is powerless to stop organized crime, they turn to crime leaders for protection and political institutions begin to deteriorate. Fear of organized crime undermines the

credibility of political reform and may encourage support for anti-democratic, hardline politicians such as Russia's Vladimir Zhirinovskiy who promised during the 1993 campaign to end organized crime in 3 months through mass arrest and execution.

The global networks of criminals, terrorists and corrupt government officials and their complex methods of smuggling goods could easily be transferred to the smuggling of nuclear materials on a massive scale. While Global Organized Crime has become increasingly more involved in the transfer of arms, encouraged in part by conflicts in the Balkans and former Soviet Union which proved to be profitable for the Russian and Italian mafia, the smuggling of nuclear materials seems to be currently isolated to select incidents and mostly to amateurs. Russia no longer has the nuclear materials protection that it had during the Cold War when materials were controlled by a tight, centralized system under a politically powerful government. In the past year, the FBI has seized major shipments of nuclear materials in Eastern Europe, including large seizures of cesium in Lithuania and uranium in the Czech Republic. As Global Organized Crime groups become more powerful and as nuclear materials become more vulnerable (through poor management, underpaid desperate workers in the nuclear facilities, and government corruption) the threat becomes more serious.

International drug trafficking poses a threat to the social fabric of all countries.

So not everyone who will be contributing to the balkanization of society will have ideological motivations: some will simply be in it for self-motivation, whether that be in relation to religious loyalties, community ties, or money. But because these interests naturally clash with the dominant society, they function well as a source of radical political energy and potential.

Social Stress, Community Succour

With the many contradictions in our society, including the above mentioned rise of global crime and self-motivation, we find the foundation of our movement. We must, above all else, fuel the social stresses within society. We must add oil to the fire. Anti-automation and anti-globalism sentiments are examples of what we can put under our influence. Sympathize with those hurt the hardest; cashiers, transportation workers, tool makers, tailors, farm workers, secretaries and receptionists, and waiters/waitresses — all of whom are considered above 50% of risk of automation, threatening the workers, their livelihoods, and families, according to the United Kingdom's Office of National Statistics.

We must also learn from past radical currents, understand their strengths and failings. The Anti-Globalization movement that spanned as far back as the late 80's, and gained traction in the late 90's and early 2000's is one such movement to learn from — factional unity, propaganda, protest tactics, etc.

Anti-Automation, Anti-Globalism, as listed above are likely candidates for propagating our ideology, and this can be seen historically. Green anarchism, especially the early forms of primitivism and forms of luddism, began to grow within the Anti-Globalization movement. It isn't a leap in logic to see that Green anarchism could take on a larger, more influential role, should a similar movement arise in the coming years, especially as the climate change (that is truly ecocide) situation worsens, displacing thousands and threatening the biosphere at large. By the early days of January 2020, over a billion animals have estimated to have died in the Australian bushfires alone. Thus climate change protests are also of keen interest to us. Even Green technol-

ogy opposition could be an entry point for our ideas, with hopes to expose the capitalist selling point for what it truly is.

As we propagate our ideology, promote social stress, we must also form community assistance programs. The Black Panther community programs come to mind, especially defense, education, and “Free Breakfast for Children.” A truly militant movement cannot hope to succeed without ‘positive’ dissemination of our ideas. With the growing climate crisis, and economic frustrations due to technology; our movement must seek to align with those in need, to support and give a helping hand.

This applies especially to lower class communities. Mercy Corps reported:

Climate change threatens the cleanliness of our air, depletes our water sources and limits food supply. It disrupts livelihoods, forces families from their homes and pushes people into poverty. Research suggests the planet has lost around one-third of its arable land over the past 40 years, in large part due to climate disasters and poor conservation, and every year more trees and soil are lost. More than 1.3 billion people live on deteriorating agricultural land, putting them at risk of depleted harvests that can lead to worsening hunger, poverty and displacement. Soil is being lost between 10 and 100 times faster than it is forming. And natural disasters are becoming increasingly frequent and destructive. The number of people affected by natural disasters doubled from approximately 102 million in 2015 to 204 million in 2016. Fewer people were affected in 2017, but at a higher price, with the year’s events costing a total of \$335 billion and driving a 49 percent increase in economic losses over the previous decade. These damages can be nearly impossible for families living in poverty to overcome. As climate events worsen, people are also threatened by more gradual changes, such as climbing temperatures and declining rainfall.

Through our own methods of community work, we can begin to find sympathy in those we need — the downtrodden, those who are the byproducts and ‘reserve army’ (as Marx says) of industrialization.

A Final Note

While the above mentioned theories have basis in Marxist, Communist and Far-Left analysis, I by no means agree with their overall goals. Primitivism as a semi-coherent ideology is still young and absolutely should look to a plethora of other, history-tested ideologies to supplement itself.

As always, the ideas and theories presented here will continue to be tested as Primitivism spreads and is challenged. At no point will I ever imply my ideas are set in stone, or my theories are immortal. I hope for my ideas to be challenged, both in discourse and in action.

One More Note

I originally wrote this almost two years ago, and it was published in its current form over a year ago in Oak Journal. Some of my thoughts about it have changed. I admit there is a strong Kaczynski inspiration, here, of which I have begun to move away from. The overall analysis I

find is still correct, but I am interested in re-engaging with how we act within this context we find ourselves in.

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